

term vision to not only lower fuel prices but to lower health care costs and increase health care quality. That is something that we tried to do, Mr. Speaker, before the closing of the first session of the 110th Congress, and something that we are going to continue to work on.

We have made several attempts to be able to lower energy prices and create thousands of new green jobs, providing incentives for clean and renewable energy. I think that it's very, very important that we do that because OPEC knows that we are forever more dependent on them. I encourage those cities and counties and States that are moving more towards clean burning fuel and flex vehicles and hybrids.

I was recently in New York and I was very excited to see many of the taxicabs are now transferring over to hybrid vehicles made by Ford. I personally purchased a Ford Escape, and it's a hybrid. Things have gotten better in the Meek family. I think that it's important that we all embrace this concept because it is a national security issue, Mr. Speaker. I think it's also important that we empower American ingenuity and also business tools to win in this global economy.

Also, I talked a little earlier about the issues of Iraq getting a big part of the dollars. But the dollars are not necessarily coming to our country and not coming to benefit U.S. families. Just to paint a picture so folks don't feel that I am just talking about energy or talking about it just for the sake of talking about it, Americans are paying more than double for gas than they did when President Bush first took office.

You look at January 22, 2001, it was \$1.47. I remember those days when I used to fill up the tank. Now, on average, a price of a gallon today is \$3.13, and some of my constituents would say, That is a low number, Congressman. I am paying a lot more than that.

I think it's important we pay attention. This information is from the Energy Information Administration. Again, these are not charts that someone made up in the back room and said, This looks good, let's put it on the floor. As it relates to gas and oil and home heating costs, they have skyrocketed, and so have oil companies' profits. When you look at the price of gas here, like I pointed out in 2001, at \$1.47, you look at 113 percent as relates to the profit line. You look at the oil companies, what they have done over the years goes all the way over to 2008 and the 310 percent profit, in the billions. I think it's important that everyone understand what is happening here as it relates to who's paying and who's benefiting. Profits are not a bad word. But greed is.

Mr. Speaker, I don't blame the oil companies, I blame the Republican minority that was once the majority, and also I blame the White House for giving these oil companies an unfair advantage over the U.S. taxpayer. As we start to balance the playing field in a

bipartisan way, I am encouraging my colleagues, especially on the Republican side, to think about the price that their constituents are paying at the pleasure of many of these oil companies that are celebrating not only record-breaking profits in the billions, but it is really sad for what is happening, especially right now in the economy.

This data was compiled by the Center for American Progress. I think that it's important that we look at and also note that there was a meeting that I had in my folder, and I need to pull that information out, in 2001, with Vice President CHENEY and many of the oil executives there at the White House, which is the best public housing in the United States of America and has the most famous office on the face of the Earth, that there was a meeting, and that happened in 2001.

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Well, I can tell you, it must have been a great meeting, because there was an energy bill that was passed shortly thereafter that gave many of our oil companies an unfair advantage over the U.S. taxpayer and what they pay at the pumps.

These are the facts here: \$30 billion in 2002 as it relates to profits. If a small business saw this kind of jump, it would no longer be a small business. I don't know of a small business outside of probably a dot.com company or some sort of search engine that picked up a niche and ended up really shooting through the roof as it relates to profits. But they are few and far between. But it seems like all of the oil companies hit the jackpot after this meeting and the endorsement of the Republican Congress.

In 2002, \$30 billion in profits; 2003, \$59 billion in profits; 2004, \$82 billion in profits. Meanwhile, we are paying more at the tank, and it is inching up. In 2005, \$109 billion in profits; 2006, \$118 billion in profits; and 2007, \$123.3 billion in profits that many of these oil companies have earned.

So when we start talking about turning green, when we start talking about making sure that the U.S. taxpayer gets their fair share and has a balanced playing field, then we have to talk about investing in the Midwest versus the Middle East. We have to talk about creating more green opportunities through biofuels and clean burning fuel here in the United States that will put people to work here in the United States and will maybe turn these companies into investing in the U.S. versus the Middle East. I think it is safer. I think it will get us more out of the conflicts that we find ourselves in in the Middle East, and I believe that it will help our economy beyond what we have seen thus far.

The economy right now is based on how much you can borrow. As you can see, the Fed has cut interest rates by half a percentage point, and then they cut it again by half a percentage point.

So it really has been built on how much you can borrow, or how much can you take out of the home, which is your financial security.

Many U.S. taxpayers and many U.S. citizens have found themselves in the situation where they have to rob Peter to pay Paul and not have those dollars to be able to assist their families in receiving a higher education, or being able to assist their families or young people in their family, assisting them in starting a new business.

I think that, Mr. Speaker, when we look at that, we have to look at the way that we are digging ourselves out of this hole. Unless we get out of Iraq more sooner than later, we will find ourselves continuing to see the image of the United States of America financially deteriorate in international markets. I think it is important that every American pays attention to this.

I hope I can get my chart that talks about the deficit, because I think that it is important that we focus on that, because even when we look at the economic stimulus package, it was based on borrowed money. It wasn't money because of good financial controls. It wasn't because the President and the Office of Budget and Management have done such a great job. It is not because we had discipline with the Republican Congress that was the Congress before this Congress as it relates to fiscal discipline. We now owe foreign nations more than we have ever owed them in the history of the Republic.

I would couch it this way: You have a neighbor that comes over to you and knocks on your door and says, can I borrow \$40? And you say, well, this is my neighbor, I believe he is pretty good for it. I will give him the \$40. Well, every time you see that neighbor, you are going to think about that \$40. I don't care if it is the next day. And when they are talking to you and they don't necessarily mention anything about the \$40 that they owe you, now you become a little bitter. Now you don't even want to listen to what that person has to say, unless they are saying they are going to give you your money back.

That is the position we are in now in the United States of America. We owe China money. We owe them. We owe OPEC countries money. We owe them. We owe Iran money. Even though folks run around here talking about Iran is a threat, Iran, we owe them money. So when we start to think about these issues, we have to think about them as it relates to making sure that we move in a way that is fiscally sound, and I think that it is important that every Member of Congress pays very close attention to that.

When you look at this war, because it is the 800 pound gorilla that is in the room, you have to look at it from the standpoint of saying the money that we are spending there, and I have been there three times in Iraq, the money we are spending there, what is the return? They say, well, who is winning?